

### **5.1: A campaign to abolish corporal punishment of children in Europe and to challenge legal acceptance of such punishment**

In 1999, the Irish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (ISPCC) ran a project to campaign against the corporal punishment of children. Corporal punishment of children is in many countries the only legalized and socially approved form of inter-personal violence. While violence against women still exists, it is no longer legal or socially approved in most countries; hitting children, on the other hand, remains common and is often seen as 'a way to help children learn'. The project had partners in England, Denmark, Spain and Norway.

#### **Materials produced**

The campaign had four main aims, one of which was to develop an awareness-raising campaign with partner organizations in as many countries as possible, using a common logo, slogan and materials, developing the case against routine violence against children in their own homes and other settings, and promoting positive, non-violent discipline. This included the development of a model for a Europe-wide advertising campaign.

The project produced information that would help other organizations to mount their own domestic campaigns. These included a booklet, a tape of TV 'spots', briefing papers, and a list of relevant judicial decisions relating to physical punishment of children. For its own domestic campaign, the ISPCC also commissioned a marketing survey that would help them to 'sell' the idea of abolishing corporal punishment. As its main output from the Daphne project, the ISPCC also produced:

- A booklet and poster in English, French and German, with the project message: 'Children are unbeatable', 'Les enfants sont imbattables', 'Kinder sind Unschlagbar'. In all three languages, this is a clever use of words, since it plays on two meanings of 'beat' – to physically assault and to defeat. Children, it says, should not be physically assaulted; but it also says children cannot be defeated.

Half of the poster is taken up by the message and the name, logo and contact information of the organization. The other half contains a photo of young girls wearing t-shirts proclaiming 'ISPCC: Making Children's Voices Heard'; one of the girls carries a sign calling on people to implement the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). The message 'Children are unbeatable' immediately catches the eye because of the clever pun.

- Two billboard campaign advertisements/leaflets on the theme 'Let's value childhood'. One features a young boy crying; the other shows a slipper, wooden spoon and a belt, all of which are used in some countries for beating (or smacking) children. A third advertisement has the theme 'Think before you SMACK!' It contains a stick drawing of a mother smacking a child -- the sort a young child might draw, to remind the person looking at the ad of the child's point of view. The reader is asked to consider three questions before smacking a child and is encouraged to 'Think before you SMACK and then – DON'T'. On the reverse side of two of the leaflets, there is a message saying why physical punishment is wrong and suggesting other options for

helping a child to learn about discipline. The reverse side of the advertisement featuring the crying boy contains statements about the CRC and points out that physical punishment is a denial of children's right to protection from violence.

### How the materials were put together

- The **target group** was quite wide, since it included organizations the partners hoped would 'sign up' to the campaign; opinion-formers who could influence both public opinion and moves for legal reform; and the public, especially parents and care-givers, with a view to changing attitudes towards corporal punishment as acceptable. Because of this difficult 'messaging' exercise, the ISPCC and partners did broad research on the issue and commissioned professional help with the messages and design.
- The **message** was simple and clever. It is not easy to find a slogan that will translate appropriately into other languages, but the pun on the word 'beat' worked. If you want to run a similar campaign in your country, you might have to find another way to reproduce the slogan so that it is memorable, clever and still effective.
- The **format** changed during the progress of the project. This was a result of consultations among the partners. The ISPCC ran the billboard campaign, but the partners in other countries thought this would not be so effective for them, and so the TV 'spots' were developed. The spots were then also piloted in Ireland.

**ISPCC contact details:** For further information on this project, contact Paul Gilligan, +353-1-679-4944, e-mail [ispcc@ispcc.ie](mailto:ispcc@ispcc.ie). The ISPCC website can be consulted at <http://www.ispcc.ie>.

### A few comments:

- It was seen as important to learn as much about the issue of corporal punishment as possible in order to be able to counteract social acceptance of it. To support, this, therefore, the ISPCC also worked to establish a European network to continue analyzing the status of corporal punishment in Europe, including relevant jurisprudence of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, the European Commission and Court of Human Rights, and relevant EU and Council of Europe recommendations, and on legal reforms and educational campaigns. The network includes NGOs and offices of children's ombudspersons. As part of their Daphne project, they held an awareness-raising seminar in Brussels, which was also used as an occasion to launch the campaigns. This was an important way to encourage political support for judicial change.
- In their final report, the ISPCC noted how important it is to build cultural differences into a project and to continue learning these as the project progresses. Although key principles of campaigns may be clear, the best way to run the campaign in each country needs to be thought through and national (or local) differences built into the output. For all this to happen, the ISPCC thought that a one-year project was too short.

## Graphics references

[5.1 Crying boy poster.jpg](#)

[5.1 Slipper, spoon and belt poster.jpg](#)

[5.1 Stick drawing poster.jpg](#)